VVILLI 100as

VISUAL ART: Computer games are a turn-on for self-styled pioneer Miltos Manetas. By Hettie Judah

self; 50 per cent dumb, humorous populism, paintings showed human be-50 per cent obscure profundity. Miltos Manetas makes daft, crazy artworks; sometimes with grand intentions, sometimes, it seems, propelled by nothing more than whimsy.

He is currently an artist, but merely because he has announced himself to be so; it is his job. Whether the stuff he makes is actually art is yet to be seen. "In the production of photographs and videos you cannot feel that metaphysical

I am the first to paint the computer! And I am the first who works with video games!?

distance that you can with painting. So they are not very good tools to use for art; you can do it, but you really need to be a fantastic artist and work hard to make a photograph which is art. I have never seen a video that is art. Maybe it will come, but not now, maybe in the future, because I believe that real art is something that comes with time." Jammed alongside all the theorising and hubris, Manetas is disconcertingly disall artists should work with done it, somebody else would video, for example, because it

is easily portable.

started exploring his futuristic themes in the seemingly anachronistic medium of oil paintings about four years ago. The ings and computers; men holding laptops, children with Play-Station consoles; in their classical styling they lent the new technology the formal respectability of, say, a book or a musical instrument.

The stuff on show at the Lux Gallery takes this a step further. Pieced together out of PlayStation games, the looped video recordings show Manetas's gameplay, in which he resists the impulses of the game and pushes the protagonists out of the narrative of their own program. Lara Croft dies over and over again, Mario sleeps under a tree, aeroplanes skim eternally across the surface of the water and snowboarders are doomed to fail-

"I am looking at the classic stories of humanity; the boy and the girl, the girl alone, the boy alone; the subjects are classic, they are like parts of Greek tragedy; there is nothing new; I just remake them using these new artworks. A snowboarder today is a contemporary hero; so here he is a contemporary hero who falls. Why are they famous today, the great heroes? Because they fall, not because they win."

Manetas explains the work as propaganda, using old stories to present new ideas, but what exactly these ideas are is not clear; resisting the narrative? Searching for flaws? Trusting artists?

About one thing he is adahave. "The decisions taken in creating are so much dictated In fact, Manetas says he that they are not real deci-



Miltos Manetas's Lara Croft may not look like it, but it is an example of one of the "classic stories of humanity"

sions. When something comes into the mind of a person it comes to many people. Maybe I am the first, maybe not; it is only important to declare that you are the first. 'I am the first to paint the computer! And I am the first who works with

video games!" As the first to work with a new medium, there are of course flaws. For all the techingenuous. He suggests that mant, however; if he had not nology involved, Manetas is still fixated with things that look like artwork; oil on canvas paintings, classical narratives, abstract art. "That is a

personal weakness; I am a person of the old century; so my references go back. Look at me like Cézanne; Cézanne was not painting Picassos, he was painting oranges and his wife. Why? Because he was of the old century. He could see a bit the future, he could see that he would like to do a new form that does not look like art at best he could do was to influence some Picassos."

Unlike Cézanne, Manetas is as busy avidly laying the foundations for the future as he is

with making art. One of his grandest projects is Chelsea World, a virtual art world within a net browser called Active Worlds. Visitors can Chelsea World, looking at reproductions of artworks and chatting with other virtual visitors. Manetas considers galleries to be pretty much defunct. He all. But he couldn't do it; the offers the virtual galleries, studios, museums and magazine offices of Chelsea World as an

alternative. Grandest of all, however, is his plan to give a new "ism" to

the world. "I commissioned a company in California called Lexicon. You give them something like \$40,000 and they deliver you a name," he says with a hint of pride. "Once we have the new ism I will be happy to give it to everybody, and then it will be a new movement and I will be able to say: I am not an artist exactly, but I am this'."

• After Video Games is at the Lux Gallery, Hoxton Square, London N1 (0171-684 2785) until Dec 5. Access to Chelsea World is via www.manetas.com

CONCERT

Chick Corea Festival Hall

Geoff Brown

ONE cannot imagine Alfred Brendel or Murray Perahia standing before the London Philharmonic Orchestra and introducing a Mozart piano concerto with the words, "OK, let's see what we can do with Amadeus here". But then Chick Corea is a pianist of a different stripe. He has played jazz piano for 30 years, with Stan Getz, Miles Davis and numerous groups of his own devising acoustic, electric and fusion. In the performance here he immediately took liberties to match his background, larding the printed score of Piano Concerto No 20, K466, with a bluesy improvised introduction, cadenzas scorched by the Spanish sun, and other piquant embellishments. He also played with a blue towel at hand, ready to mop up the

Sacrilege, or what? Not particularly. Performing practices in Mozart's time allowed for more freedom than most current classical pianists usually give themselves; and Corea's minor-key jazz musings did no harm to Mozart's filigree beauty. Instead, trouble emerged when Corea played the music straight, tinkling routinely, especially in the first movement, missing the precision and brio that both Mozart and jazz need.

A jazz pianist like Keith Jarrett might interpret the classics with ease; on this showing Corea is not in his league. The LPO played dutifully but unmemorably for the conductor, Anne Manson, who looked sweet in a spangly black dress but never knew what to do with her left hand.

Corea then went off for a change of shirt, and re-emerged for a performance of his own Piano Concerto No 1, written for Mozartean forces with the addition of drum-kit and percussion. But despite the introduction of these instruments, jazz inflections took a back seat to yards and yards of loosely structured, tonally skewed, tortuous note-spinning stretching over some 35 (very long) minutes. Sometimes it was the prolix manner of Milhaud that came to mind, at other times it was the Baroque concerto grosso. And intermittently, whenever the textures



Chick Corea: should have a listen to Keith Jarrett

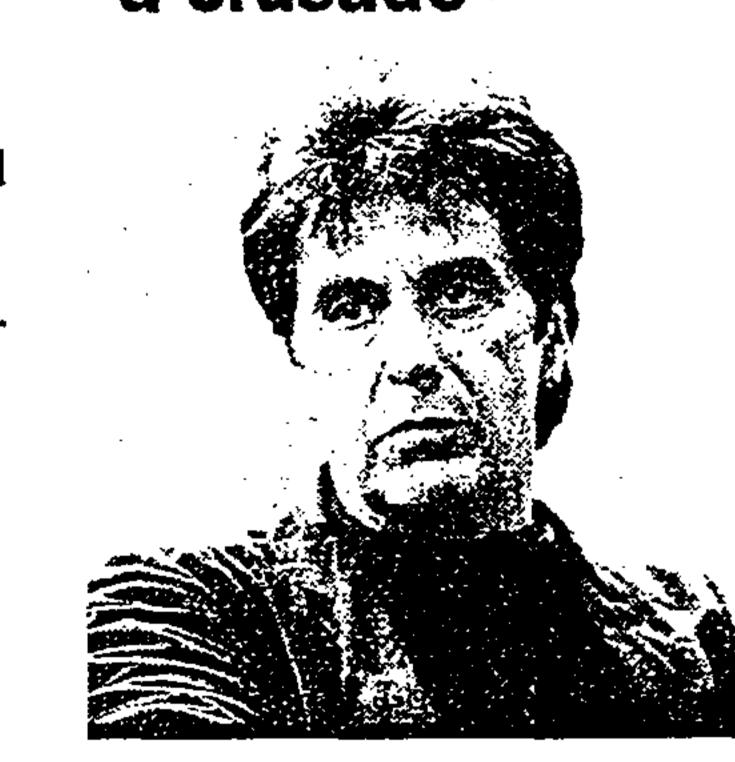
cleared, a little Copland poked through.

So many notes, to so little purpose. Certainly no unforewarned listener would have guessed that the · concerto carried a dedication to "the spirit of religious freedom".

After the interval, Corea's present group, Origin, joined him onstage for a ramble with the orchestra through his most famous song composition from the 1970s, Spain. Modest happiness at last. For here Corea stuck closest to jazz, working his way through gaudy orchestral displays to the tune's tripping rhythms, spinning out into improvised spots — for the flute, trombone, soprano saxophone, piano and double-bass — before rounding off with the same brass hammering that had launched the piece 25 minutes before. Finally, something to get the foot

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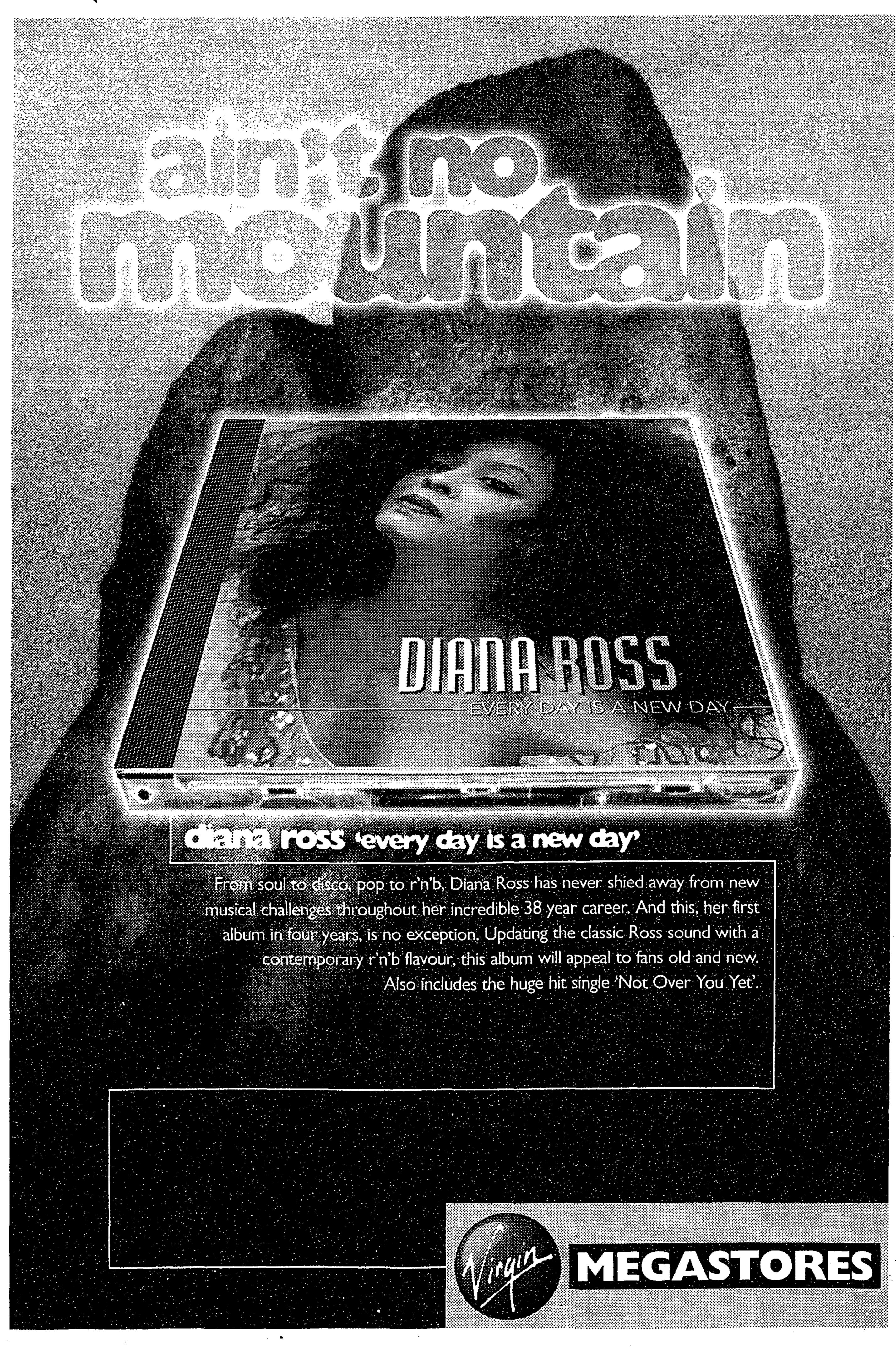
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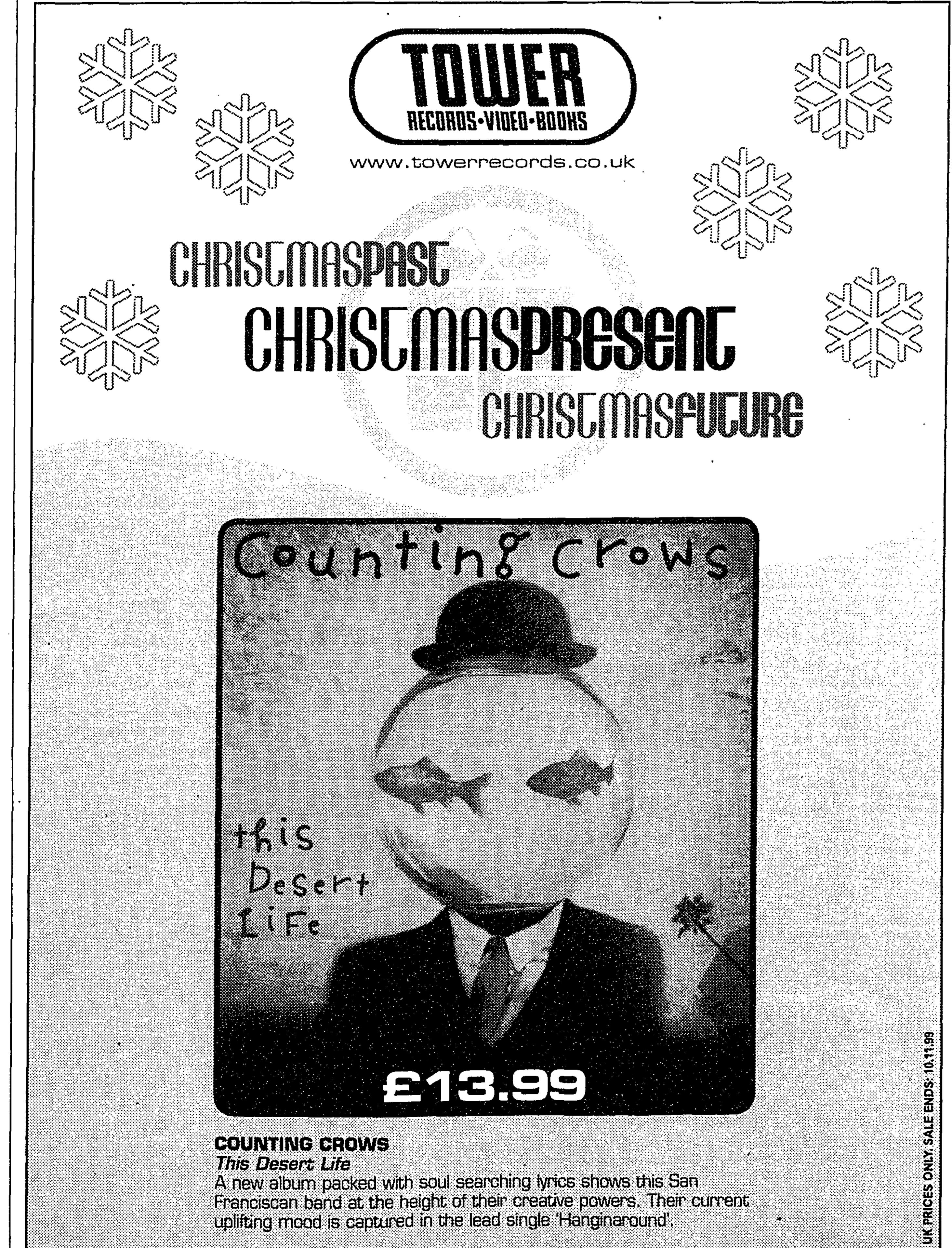
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